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by
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SCENE—Give full description of set.

At rise of curtain stage empty, light low. A noise at door and after a moment Dick enters, cautiously flashing the gleam from a dark-lantern into the room. He goes quickly about the room, peering into corners)

Dick—Not much chance for dough in dis place. (*Makes further search. Discovers evening paper on table and reads headlines by light of his lantern*) "Five hundred dollars reward for return of diamond necklace. No questions asked." (*Takes necklace from pocket and holds it to to light.*) No questions asked. Looks like a bait to pinch me. (*Puts necklace back into pocket*). Can't make a raise on dat now. They'd get me sure. (*Takes step back and runs into chair.*) Got to make a raise somehow.

Mother (*speaking off up stairs*)—Walter! is that you.

Dick—Gee, some one's coming (*hides behind chair at left.*)

Mother (*opening door at top of landing.*)—Walter! Not here. (*Comes slowly down stairs.*) I thought I heard a noise. (*Feels her way to electric light at foot of stairs.*) I'll turn on the light It will make it bright and cheerful when he comes

Dick (*takes revolver from pocket and stand ready. As she moves across stage she bumps into chair.*) Blind (*he puts gun into pocket and stand looking at her.*)

Mother—Why, I did not leave this chair here.

Some one has been here. (*A sigh of heavy breathing by Dick.*) There is some one here—Who is here? Speak, please speak. Don't be afraid. Nothing can harm you. Only good can come here.

Dick (*coming slowly forward.*)

Mother—Give me your hand. How did you get in here?

Dick—Through the door.

Mother—What did you come for?

Dick—I was hungry.

Mother—I'm glad you came here. My son Walter will be glad to share his lunch with you. He'll be here soon. He's working late at the bank tonight.

Dick—Lady, I lied to you. I'm here to steal.

Mother—To steal? Then you are a—a—

Dick—A thief, lady. Dat's right. Call me by my right name, a thief.

Mother—No, no. I will call you my son.

Dick—Your son! I never knowed a mother.

Mother—Poor boy. How old are you?

Dick—Twenty years old, lady.

Mother—Just the age of my other boy. God protect him wherever he is tonight. (*She fondles his hands.*) You have lost a finger. How did it happen?

Dick—De last time I was in jail. I—

Mother—In jail! Poor boy. You must promise me never to steal again. Tell me, how did you get into such a life?

Dick—Me fadder died when I was about eight years old, and den I lived in alleys and bunked in ash barrels. De old man was always bull of booze and I tried to take care of him, but he got in a fight one night (*wipes his eyes.*) Lady, I ain't done notin' but steal since.

Mother—But from now, you will enter into a new life. Listen, my son. I, too, was in prison for many years. Jealousy, hatred, revenge, drove my husband from me, and when he left our home, he took one of our twin boys. Then came years of

bodily suffering and mental agony. The prison doors never opened; and then came a day when I could no longer see the boy that was left to me—my boy Walter. The darkness was intolerable, unbearable. I cursed, I raged, and then in my agony and despair, I fell upon my knees and prayed God to give me back my sight—to give me back my sight just long enough to raise my boy. And then a little hand clasped mine, even as I clasp yours now, and a child's voice said "Mother, don't be afraid, I will lead you,—I will be your eyes." I clasped my little Walter to my heart and showered him with kisses, and in that moment the peace that "passeth all understanding" came to me. And in all these years, my boy has cared for me. The love that entered my heart that moment brought to me the true light. So you see, my son, I too know what it is to have been in prison. But now the doors are open, and we are freed from bondage. (*Clock striking, his business.*)

Dick—I got to go, lady. I got to go—

Mother—Won't you wait and see Walter?

Dick—No, lady, no. I got to go—

Mother—But you will come back, you will come back tomorrow?

Dick—Yes, lady, I will come back as soon as I can—

Mother—Here. Take this, take it, dispose of the jewels in it,—I don't value it except for the good it will do. Open it and give me the pacture in it.

Dick (*taking brooch*)—God. It's me fadder! (*With shaking, trembling hands, he puts it back on the table.*) Here, lady, I can't take it,—I got to go. (*Business, and as he passes her, he stoops down and takes a piece of her dress in his hands and kisses it.*)

Mother—Good night, good night, my boy. I shall expect you tomorrow. (*He exits, closing door. She feels her way across the stage to a stand on which rests a bible,—nothing is said, she simply feels the*

pages and turns several times until she comes to her right passage, and then she reads with her fingers. At the finish of the speech, a key is put into the door, and Walter enters.)

Walter—Up so late, little mother? Why, this is a surprise. (*Embraces her.*) Tell me the reason.

Mother—Hearing a noise, I came down stairs, and I have had such a strange experience. I found a boy of twenty, just the age of your twin brother. —I found him suffering and unhappy.

Walter—Who was he?

Mother—I don't know. But he has promised to come back tomorrow.

Walter—Oh, yes, that must have been the fellow I met a block away from here. He looked at me very strangely, and then asked me if I was Walter. I was a little startled, but answered "yes," and then he gave me this package, and told me to read the evening paper. Let us see what we have here? (*Undoes the little package, takes out the necklace.*)

Mother—What is it, my son?

Walter—A diamond necklace. (*Hands it to her.*)

Mother—A diamond necklace.

Walter (*quickly taking paper and reading the large headlines of reward for necklace. Repeats reward*)—Mother, mother, why that was the thief! That was the thief!

Mother—My son, my son! Judge not, lest ye be judged. He promised me to reform; to enter into a new life; and this is his first act.

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